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Summary

Confession and Rejection

Westphal's struggle for Luther and Melanchthon

The thesis in hand looks at the specific role of the Hamburg theologian Joachim Westphal between 1548, when the *Augsburg Interim* was introduced, and the schism of Worms, in 1557. It describes the process by which Westphal discovered his confessional identity while giving special consideration to his struggle for Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon.

The investigation demonstrates that the long-nurtured image of Westphal as a belligerent “Gnesio-Lutheran” is an oversimplification that needs to be modified and further differentiated by examining the sources more closely. On studying hitherto disregarded writings, sermons and letters, Westphal initially emerges as a vehement opponent of the *Interim*, who does not associate proximity to Matthias Flacius with a radical renunciation of Melanchthon. In contrast to Flacius, Westphal’s commitment to Luther converges with an incessant courting of Melanchthon. Analysing Westphal’s writings manifests that the process by which he establishes his own identity finds room as well as boundaries in the tension that exists between looking towards the broad network of theologians of a “Gnesio-Lutheran orientation” on the one hand and the persistent adherence to Melanchthon’s rootedness in the Augsburg Confession (*Confessio Augustana*) on the other hand. Luther and his legacy remain a fixed point of orientation for him during the crisis of the *Interim* and along the path of his personal emancipation.

Against this background, the thesis in hand sets out to outline Westphal’s ambivalent and idiosyncratic position in the process of confessional differentiation, aside from the negotiations over the Eucharist. As a pupil of Luther and Melanchthon, he struggles with the legacy of his teachers, transforming their teachings and setting himself apart in the face of on-going and newly erupting debates. His proximity to and distance from his teachers, the way he is guided by and sets himself apart from them – especially Melanchthon – all this harbours, quasi subcutaneously, Westphal’s struggle to establish his own theological identity. Hence Westphal’s personal development can be described as leading from initially favouring an open reformation, guided by the Wittenberg theology, and ending up with a confessionally shaped identity. This process, observed in a single protagonist within the newly erupting process of pluralisation following the introduction of the *Interim*, may serve as an example of a template for the general transformation from a Protestant disposition without clear distinctions to a

clearly delimited confessional identity. In demonstrating this, the present investigation seeks to contribute to the current research efforts.

There is a consensus within recent confessional research that the processes of standardisation and delimitation had not been completed by the middle of the 16th century. The reciprocal influence of social and political events has a dynamising effect on the transformation of reformational concepts of knowledge and identity. Thus the introduction of the *Interim* in 1548 triggers a controversial public debate among those related via the Augsburg Confession about their different interpretations; up until then, for a long time concepts of confessional identity such as the *Confessio Augustana* were not considered to be divisive in nature but rather an acknowledgement of theological diversity. The introduction of the *Interim* and the resulting debate about the *adiaphora* turn the Wittenberg Reformation into a culture of constructive debate that ultimately gives rise to confessional identity.

The underlying construct behind the present thesis is the characterisation of theologians as being of a “Gnesio-Lutheran orientation”, which does justice to Westphal’s processual, inner-Protestant creation of confession and identity, and to his personal path, through its inclusive line of thought. Westphal too proves to be an active participant within the network of theologians who have set out to administer Luther’s reformational legacy and who enter into new cooperations and alliances in the process. In grappling with the *Interim*, Westphal develops his own theological profile. The distinguishing feature of the process by which Westphal finds his own identity, between announcing in 1548 that he is rooted in Wittenberg theology and his irreversible break with Melancthon in connection with the schism of Worms in 1557, among those related to the Augsburg Confession, is his claimed authority to interpret Luther’s legacy.

Westphal achieves respect and prestige, because his florilegium *Sententia reverendi viri D. M. Lutheri* recommends itself as a programmatic compendium of Luther’s fundamental reformational objectives. This work not only provides orientation in the pre-interim teachings of Wittenberg theology; it also updates its key claims through comments in marginal notes, thereby supplying their means of application in the fight against the introduction of *adiaphora*. Furthermore, Westphal’s florilegium distinguishes itself as a composition of historiographic crosslinks and references between Luther, Melancthon and Brenz, which create and bind identity in terms of their content. By such means, Westphal has a dynamising effect on the transformation of fundamental Protestant claims and participates in the process of standardisation and delimitation, towards concepts of confessional identity, as expressed in the Augsburg Settlement of 1555 and the schism of Worms in 1557.

Westphal’s *Farrago* of 1552 leads to an escalation in the debate over the correct interpretation of Articles 10 and 13 of the Augsburg Confession. The discourse among Protestants concerning the Eucharist, in which Westphal wants to include his teacher Melancthon with as clear a position as possible, comes to a head with the recess of

1555. The existentially threatening crisis of Protestantism leaves no room for plural statements of opinion with an open reformational approach; instead, it leads to progressive sclerosis. In the face of ever-increasing pressure towards confessional differentiation, Westphal takes on an active role; thanks to him, Melanchthon's authority and influence continue to be taken into consideration for the overall Protestant situation, even after agreeing on the Peace of Augsburg in 1555.

Through his anthology of Melanchthon's works, Westphal succeeds in presenting the young Melanchthon as being in agreement with the *Confessio Augustana*, helping to determine the Protestant course in preparation of the Colloquy of Worms and recommending himself as a dependable negotiating partner in the dispute with Catholics. Westphal's arbitration between Melanchthon and Flacius, and his struggle to preserve the polyphonic Protestant camp's ability to act in the face of threatening controversies at the Worms Colloquy, casts a new light on him as a mediator. Westphal does not take on a polarising role in the confessional differentiation of identity concepts within Protestantism, but rather that of an integrator and persuader, someone who, up until 1557, wrestles for Melanchthon as the exclusive authority in the confrontation with the Catholics.

Westphal falls out with Melanchthon definitively in the context of the preliminary negotiations of Worms, amid open criticism and hostilities. As a result of nervous, contentious debates on the topic of the Eucharist, Westphal too is dragged in by the centrifugal forces and has to fend off disturbing allegations made against him: on the one hand, his struggle for Melanchthon is claimed to bring him into the immediate proximity of the Philippists; on the other hand, he is said to adhere to the doctrine of transubstantiation with regard to the Eucharist. The definitive break with Melanchthon takes place in September 1557.

Examining Westphal's other writings, apart from *Farrago*, paints a portrait of the Hamburg theologian as a passionate opponent of the *Interim*, who conducts the literary battle against the introduction of *adiaphora* from early times on. Being rooted in Wittenberg theology, he defends Luther's legacy by simultaneously struggling with Melanchthon's authority in the interest of unity within the Protestant camp. He is a transmitter and transformer of reformational theology, by placing his own emphasis within the network of theologians of a "Gnesio-Lutheran orientation", starting with the *Interim* crisis. His relationship with Flacius and the Magdeburg exiles remains ambivalent. His proximity to and distance from Flacius and the collaboration on the Magdeburg Centuries can only be touched on peripherally in this context; a detailed examination of these specific aspects of his activities would go beyond the scope of this thesis.

Concerning the question originally asked, whether Westphal's relationship to Calvin is already comprehensively negatively defined by his *Farrago* of 1552, some options remain open after this investigation. Westphal's years of wrestling for Melanchthon and his idiosyncratic role in the process of confessional differentiation

after the introduction of the *Interim* give occasion to re-read *Farrago* without a biased, Gnesio-Lutheran-fixated disposition towards Calvin. Despite all the controversial dynamisations, Westphal's approach of struggling for ways of mediating between Upper-German- and Swiss-influenced currents and the Wittenberg theology, is remarkable and deserves to be recognised in a European context.

The thesis in hand describes the specific path followed by Westphal in his confession and his rejection, and paints a new and hitherto unknown picture of the Hamburg theologian. In the year that the Reformation celebrates its 500th anniversary, it may contribute to the inquiry into post-interim denominational studies.